



California Certified Organic Farmers

Livestock and Seed Programs
Agriculture Marketing Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Stop 0249, Room 2092-S
Washington, DC 20250-0249

December 2, 2002

Dear USDA:

I am opposed to the proposal of including irradiated food in the National School Lunch Program.

Exposing food to radioactive substances that are supposed to kill harmful pathogens and extend shelf life changes the molecular structure of these foods, making it difficult for humans to metabolize them. In addition, it has been documented that foods that have been irradiated lose much of their nutritional value. Because of several reasons (metabolic stage, environmental toxin exposure, and weight-to-nutrient intake-ratio), children are the most dependent on a nutrient-dense diet. Depleted food that is less absorbable will lead to undernourished children and will severely challenge our children's health.

Food irradiation is neither safe nor is it taking on the real issue of food safety. Irradiation itself is potentially harmful to human health, and the process of irradiation creates new harmful substances, such as benzene and formaldehyde, which have already been proven to interrupt the human endocrine system and cause cancer.

Because of these reasons, this technology is prohibited for organic foods under the USDA National Organic Program.

Food irradiation allows the nuclear weapon industry to dispose their toxic and radioactive by-products cesium-137 and cobalt-60. Proponents argue that this technology will be able to address the issue of food safety in this country; for example the recall of 12 million pounds of non-organic raw hamburger patties in the U.S. in 2001. But this technology only masks the real issue of improper and unsanitary food handling and inhumane livestock mass-production. Not one single case of food contamination in the United States has ever been linked to organic foods. What we need to change is the way we treat and value our food. Irradiation will not solve the problem.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best regards,

Helge Hellberg
Certified Nutritionist, C.N.C.
Marketing & Communications Director
California Certified Organic Farmers